

**SEABIRDS AT SEA, DECEMBER 1987-FEBRUARY 1988 (SHIP-BASED OBSERVATIONS
CVZ/DGW, CVZ/NIOZ, NIOZ)**

Offshore observations were made on several trips on the North Sea, ea, most of them being conducted in mainland coastal waters of the southern half, ranging from the English Channel (twice) to Sylt (Denmark) and including the Dogger Bank area. The Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and CvZ/Dienst Getijdewateren (Rijkswaterstaat, DGW) organized trips with MV Holland (Directie Noordzee, Rijswijk), RV Tridens (fishery research vessel Rijksinstituut voor Visserijonderzoek RIVO, IJmuiden) and RV Aurelia (NIOZ). Long journeys, up to Aberdeen and Esbjerg, were done on board of RV Tridens.

Fulmars, which had been unusually scarce from September through November 1987, came back in the southern North Sea in December. It has been abundant since that time and could be observed in great numbers in February in the Dogger Bank area. Coloured specimens were observed regularly in small numbers. Gannets were plentiful too in the Dogger Bank area in February, as they had been in the English Channel in January. All but very few in adult plumage. In Dutch coastal waters it was rather scarce, but present, in these months.

Little Gulls were observed in numbers throughout the winter. We have found them foraging at several places, e.g. the English Channel, the 'Voordelta' (off Zeeland) and in the German Bight. At times, Herring-, Great Black-backed- and Common Gulls were numerous; figures which urgently need further analysis to find any patterns/trends. Kittiwakes were constantly present in fair numbers in the offshore zone.

Auks were common throughout the winter. Many Guillemots were found close inshore in December, with considerably fewer Razorbills (ca. 10:1). In January Guillemots were found concentrated at scattered locations along our coastline, e.g. in the 'Voordelta' and near the Wadden Sea islands. Quite a number of the 'local' Guillemot population was seen in the vicinity of Helgoland during a two days visit in January. Razorbills became rather more numerous compared to Guillemots during February and early March. Little Auks were observed in Shetland and Scottish waters, but were also found plentiful in the Dogger Bank area in early March. Also Puffins were seen in good numbers in this area in early March, a species which was found to be common along the English coast in February.

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